THE SCOTTISH
FUEL POVERTY
ADVISORY PANEL

Chair of the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel

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To: Mr Stephen Gethins, Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy
Cc: Duncan Massey MSP, Convener, Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee

Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel comment on the Scottish Government's delay to revising the Fuel Poverty Strategy

Dear Stephen

I am writing to comment on your recent letter to the Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee on the Scottish Government's intention to delay the revision of the Fuel Poverty Strategy. The Panel welcomes the assurance you give of the Scottish Government's continuing commitment to eradicate fuel poverty, particularly given the high energy prices facing Scottish households this winter.

Under the existing Fuel Poverty Strategy, the Scottish Government is not on course to meet its own statutory 2030 interim targets. Although we would like to have seen the Fuel Poverty Strategy revised by the end of this year, if this delay leads to a more robust Strategy, then we are broadly supportive of your decision to delay it. However, we recommend that the Scottish Government publish a revised timetable for the Strategy revision as soon as possible to ensure that any potential reputational risk from the delay is mitigated by a public plan that outlines when stakeholders in particular can expect to see the proposed revisions to the Strategy and be consulted.

The Panel remains committed to supporting the Scottish Government to produce its revised Strategy through our advice and research, challenge, and the external perspectives that we can provide. Our hope is that, as we discussed when we met on 23rd of September, a robust revised Strategy will help to bring a greater strategic priority to tackling fuel poverty in Scotland. We welcome the intention to ensure congruence between the Scottish Government's work on Heat in Buildings and the revised Fuel Poverty Strategy. The Panel has previously highlighted the need for accelerated investment in improving the energy efficiency of homes to tackle this driver of fuel poverty. Delay in reviewing the Fuel Poverty Strategy should not delay the required increase in the allocation of resources in 2027/28.

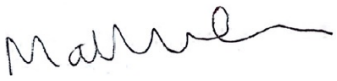
In our response to the Scottish Government's Tackling Fuel Poverty in Scotland: periodic report: 2021-2024 we made nine recommendations which provide a framework for revising the Fuel Poverty Strategy, these include that the revised Strategy should have a:

- Delivery and resource plan, produced in consultation with key stakeholders.
- Clear governance structure to oversee the delivery plan.
- Monitoring and evaluation framework allowing its impact on progress towards the targets to be measured.
- Clear view on how policy co-dependencies with other Scottish Government statutory targets – Child Poverty, Climate Change and Heat Networks' output – are contributing to meeting fuel poverty targets.
- Strategic and measurable approach to influencing on reserved issues should form part of the delivery plan.
- Research approach underpinning the Strategy to support the weighting of the different fuel poverty drivers and to inform understanding of fuel poverty experience.

In our Periodic Report response, we reflect on the role which crisis funding plays in the temporary mitigation of fuel poverty both in preventing some households from falling into fuel poverty and as an enabler, creating the support network and capacity for those struggling to heat their homes to pursue energy efficiency measures. This has a more permanent effect in reducing and lifting people out of fuel poverty. In this context, it was interesting to see the energy support measures announced in the UK budget on the 28 October. We would welcome a discussion with you about the Ministerial thinking in this space and additional measures which should be introduced to mitigate the impact of increased fuel prices this winter.

I look forward to our next routine catch up and as discussed when we met look forward to welcoming you to join one of our Panel meetings. I have asked the Secretariat to work with your officials to identify that most appropriate time for this and it may be that we could use this opportunity to provide some in person reflections on the emerging revisions to the Strategy ahead of the formal consultation.

Kind Regards,



Matthew Cole (Chair)

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